



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs

Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, DC 20555-0001

E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>

No. 04-125

October 5, 2004

NRC CHAIRMAN DISCUSSES NUCLEAR PLANT SECURITY AT AMERICAS NUCLEAR ENERGY SYMPOSIUM

MIAMI - Security at U.S. nuclear power plants has been substantially upgraded since Sept. 11, 2001, with higher federal requirements placed on utilities that operate nuclear facilities, Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Nils J. Diaz said Tuesday.

"Nuclear power plants have been and are even more so now among the most well-protected elements of our national civilian infrastructure," Diaz said in remarks prepared for delivery at the Americas Nuclear Energy Symposium jointly sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy and the American Nuclear Society.

"The NRC has further strengthened security requirements at nuclear power plants and enhanced our coordination with federal, state and local organizations since Sept. 11," Diaz said. "In addition, the NRC has conducted research-based studies which concluded that a significant radiological release affecting public health and safety is unlikely from a terrorist attack, including a large commercial aircraft. And time is available to protect the public in the unlikely event of a radiation release." Diaz also said the NRC is:

- improving nuclear plant operating safety in the United States through the use of a new Reactor Oversight Program that provides a better inspection regime for plants. He said the NRC objective is to "provide the tools for inspecting and assessing licensee performance in a manner that was more risk-informed, objective, predictable and understandable than the previous oversight processes, and that ensures the agency's performance goals are being met."
- providing oversight in a way that corresponds to the actual, real world risk presented, rather than a theoretical worst-case scenario. He added, "Simply put, technical and regulatory decisions are informed by the real world – utilizing advancing scientific knowledge, improving technological capabilities and the lessons that have been learned through decades of operating experience."

Outlining security advances, Diaz said that the steps taken by the NRC include: ordering plants to take into account a more challenging adversarial threat; tighter access controls and vehicle checks at greater stand-off distances; significantly improved force-on-force exercises to test the capabilities of plant defenders; better readiness by plant security forces; and enhanced liaison with the intelligence

community, and federal, state and local authorities responsible for protecting the national critical infrastructure through integrated response training.

The symposium brought together members of the government, industry, and academic communities for presentations and discussions on issues related to the future of nuclear energy in the Americas.

###